

Proverbs 1:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which
taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

Analysis

The conclusion: greedy gain (betsa - unjust profit, covetousness) takes the life of its possessors. The Hebrew wordplay suggests those who grasp at gain are themselves grasped by death. Greed doesn't merely risk life but actively destroys it - ill-gotten wealth becomes the instrument of the wicked's demise. This principle warns that covetousness is suicidal, contradicting the lie that wealth obtained by any means brings security. Jesus echoes this warning against greed (Luke 12:15).

Historical Context

Summarizes the extended warning against joining thieves (vv.10-19). Ancient Israel lacked prisons; justice for robbery was often swift and violent. Criminal gain was quite literally life-threatening.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. In what areas does pursuit of gain tempt you toward unethical means?

2. How does this verse's warning shape your understanding of 'profitable' opportunities that compromise integrity?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-------|-----------------------------|---------|------|----------|
| יָן | אֵל הַחַיִּים | כָּל | בְּצַעַד | בְּצֵעַ | אֶת | נַפְשׁוֹ |
| H3651 | So are the ways | H3605 | of every one that is greedy | of gain | H853 | the life |
| | H734 | | H1214 | H1215 | | H5315 |
| בְּעַל יוֹ | יִקָּח: | | | | | |
| of the owners | which taketh away | | | | | |
| H1167 | H3947 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 15:27 (Parallel theme): He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

2 Peter 2:3 (Parallel theme): And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Habakkuk 2:9 (Parallel theme): Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!

Ecclesiastes 5:13 (Parallel theme): There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.